

# 2001-03 ▶ 4 x 4 House

Kobe, Hyogo



## View from the roadside.

In the beginning there was only one house.

Left page

## View from the seaside.

At night the house appears like a lighthouse.

Dimensions and geometry explain the house's name.

This is an extremely small private house standing on the coast of the Inland Sea in Japan. Eroded by the sea, much of the site is under water. The site is unique. Regulations regarding shore protection limited construction to a small, 5 x 5-meter space. The biggest problem was creating ample living space on the extremely small site. The more difficult the problem, the more interesting Ando's solution is likely to be. This is an example of Ando's style of humor. Confronted with a difficult task, he was able to create a building unlike anything we have seen before. A Japanese periodical called *Brutus* (published by Magazine House) invited persons interested in asking Ando to design a building to submit possible sites. This unique site was chosen by Ando himself from the various submissions.

Ando has taken a plan, 4 x 4 meters—the maximum dimensions possible for the site—and created a four-story tower. The entrance and utility room are on the first floor, a bedroom is on the second floor, a study is on the third floor, and the living/dining room (the heart of the house) is on the top floor. The extremely small site permitted nothing elaborate; the organization is simple and clear. The stairway occupies a large percentage of the floor space, especially since each floor is only 16 square meters. However, the stairway takes up only half as much space on the top floor since there is no need for it to go any higher. Advantage was taken of this fact to displace the topmost floor by one meter and give the kitchen and living area more space. Here, too, we can see Ando work his particular magic—the transformation of the accidental into the inevitable.

The topmost floor is a cube, four meters to a side, that is pushed out toward the sea. The seaward side is completely glazed; the view is such that we feel as if we were out on the sea on a boat. The space allows us to fully enjoy the wide expanse of the sea and the sky. It corroborates Ando's assertion that expansiveness of space has nothing to do with the size of a building.

